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THE STATE LEVEL PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF TITLE I. SYMPOSIUM.

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OUTLINED IN THIS REPORT ARE STATE AND LOCAL PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT TITLE I PROGRAM OBJECTIVES, SPECIALIZED PERSONNEL, DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS, AND STABILITY OF ADMINISTRATION AND FUNDING. AMONG THE PROPOSALS FOR DEALING WITH THESE PROBLEMS ARE SUGGESTIONS FOR REGIONAL OFFICES TO ADMINISTER AND EVALUATE TITLE I PROGRAMS AND FOR A NATIONAL REVIEW PANEL TO MAKE PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONGRESS. THE STANDARDIZATION OF DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF INFORMATION FEEDBACK ARE ALSO RECOMMENDED. (LB)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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SYMPOSIUM

The State Level Problems Associated With Assessment of the Impact of Title I

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Introduction:

Not having had an opportunity to discuss these symposium topics with Dr. Froomkin, I must say beforehand that there no doubt exists some overlap of state problems with federal problems. Likewise there will probably be some topics covered herein that are common with Dr. Maxey's and Dr. Foley's insights.

Let me also say that my encounter with Title I has been primarily as a coordinator of research to evaluate the impact of Title I for a given year in a given state (Iowa-1965-66). Therefore my comments are colored by an extremely limited scope of activity. Finally, it must be said that the agency for which I worked, the Iowa Educational Information Center, while supported by the Iowa Department of Public Instruction was also affiliated somewhat more strongly in practice with the Measurement Research Center and The University of Iowa. Therefore a certain autonomy of operation was felt and I was in the position of seeking data for research from the state department but not <u>for</u> the state department. This provided a certain advantage of being slightly removed from the battlefield itself yet close enough to make some observations.

A. I would first like to make some observations about relationships between local and state agencies and between state and federal agencies. Looking back to 1965, the timetables for implementation of Title I projects were quite brief. Evidently there was not sufficient time for

the Office of Education to design adequate forms and procedures to implement their objectives nor time to adequately orient state personnel to their thinking. What can be said on this at the federal level is even more true at the state level. In state departments it was frequently necessary to shift personnel from one state department role to that of a role in the Title I area. Personnel thus placed were typically non-research oriented and over-taxed in their workloads. Consequently the articulation with local agencies left much to be desired, particularly in the area of evaluation of effectiveness. The sheer volume of paperwork involved in accounting for purchases made with Title I funds was itself impossible to adequately handle. The upshot was that local-state and state-federal relationships were strained regarding reporting procedures, deadlines for reports, dates for release of funds and guidelines for evaluation.

These time-personnel problems have not disappeared with the ensueing years. Form revision always creates misunderstandings and additional work on the part of those completing them. Where one has established computer programs to produce analyses and reports, revisions in required data analyses and reports can be particularly expensive and time consuming. Other problems between local and state and between state and federal have also arisen not as a consequence of timetables and report forms but for other reasons to be elaborated upon.

B. Special consideration should be given to the problem

of professional competence of personnel available at state and local agencies. Many persons at the local school level responsible for administration of Title I projects have little or no experience in the designing of situations to assess improvement in education, in collection of data, and particularly in analyzing data to make inferences concerning the projects. It has been my experience and my associates experience to visit with local officials who feel adequate evaluation data consists of the local percentile ranks obtained by children on a single testing using an outdated instrument. In addition, I suspect it is not impossible to find situations in which data are manipulated to prove a political point in order to utilize funds in a way desired by a few. Data thus reported are, at best, often misleading. At the State Department level, the task of assembling percentiles, stanines, standard scores and raw scores from many forms of numerous tests becomes a nightmare. The best that can be mustered up to evaluate some projects are statements like, "It seemed to turn out all right." Competent personnel at the local level might solve some of these problems. This solution is at best a remote possibility since it implies that many local school personnel would be trained in statistics and measurement - a situation as likely to occur as the proverbial snowball in H. A more realistic solution will be offered later. It should be noted that state departments are staffed to a large degree by former public school principals and superintendents. I shall not comment about their research and evaluative skills.

C. Now I would like to move toward the crux of what I feel to be state level problems.

The first centers around the concept embodied in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 itself. Section 212 stated that "the commissioner shall submit to the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare for transmission to the Congress on or before December 31, 1967, a full report of the operation of this title, including its effectiveness in improving the educational attainment of educationally deprived children...". Three substantial problems are thus introduced:

(1) the definition of what constitutes "effectiveness",

(2) the determination of improvement, and

(3) the identification of educationally deprived children.

Looking at the problem of defining "effectiveness," one may consider several alternatives:

(a) Subjective feelings that children have benefited from experience encountered via Title I projects and

(b) Statistically significant gains in pupil scores used to measure objectives of projects which would not have occurred without inclusion of pupils in the project.

Most evaluators I suspect would prefer the latter alternative in that one learns to mistrust subjective judgements. Public school personnel are prone however to employ the first alternative. Reports from state department to the U.S. Office of Education contain considerable subjective material in evaluating "effectiveness." Guidelines eminating from the U.S.O.E. should

perhaps be more specific in defining "effectiveness."

The second problem, that of determining "improvement" relates, of course, to the prior definition of "effectiveness." If one chooses the empirical route, a number of technical problems related to research design are presented. For example:

(a) Are the stated objectives for a given project amenable to quantification and measurement?

(b) Assuming (a) above to be true, do instruments exist for use?

(c) Are the time spans involved for a given project adequate to detect measureable changes using available instruments?

(d) Can the effect of the Title I project be "partialed out" from other environmental influences?

(e) Are comparison groups (control groups) available for comparative studies?

(f) Can data from different schools with similar project objectives be combined for analyses?

The answer to the above questions is all too frequently "no." The satisfying of all the above conditions poses major problems for the local project director in determining what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. A procedure for meeting the above needs will be presented shortly.

The third major problem stated above was the problem in identifying Title I children themselves. True enough, criteria concerning parental income have been forwarded. Obviously however, all lower income parents do not have educationally

deprived children. Guidelines fortunately have been broad enough to permit inclusion of other children; the total financial support being the major determinant of the numbers of children included in projects. What seems to have occurred in a number of instances is that Title I funds have replaced or supplemented special education funds in many school board budgets. That is, funds from Title I are used to support existing programs for the educable mentally retarded and previous funds spent in this area are absorbed into the general budget. Thus frequently new programs were not generated. In these cases, as in others, I suspect the children involved are frequently not those that are educationally retarded as a consequence of environmental stimulus restriction but reatrded as a consequence of biological or physiological constraints. It would seem that the intent of the Title I was to provide accelerated and individualized school experiences for children who are educationally retarded as a consequence of their familial and cultural environment. Further clarification of criteria for inclusion in Title I projects would therefore be helpful.

It should be noted that the structure of the E.S.E.A. and Title I in particular is to attack special aspects or problems in education, not simply pump money into the general education budget.

To summarize what I have been saying in this section let me rephrase what I feel are important issues pervading all of

Title I, at least at the state level, in the form of a compound question: "What should be or are the objectives of Title I projects, who do the projects affect and can the success in meeting the objectives be evaluated?"

II. I would now like to elaborate on specific problems encountered at the state level. Later I will offer some solutions to those problems.

A. The first problem I see at the state level is the untenable objectives put forward by local agencies for their projects. Gross statements like "improve child's self image" I find more than distasteful from our ability to assess the degree to which a "self-image" has been improved. This is not to say such things don't exist or are unmeasureable. It simply lacks the specificity I feel should be embodied in any set of educational objectives.

Classification of projects on the basis of objectives become a major problem for state department researchers desiring to summarize the types of projects funded.

Some projects state an objective like "improve school attitude" yet spend 90% of their allocation on a portable classroom or school room renovation for special education. There seem to exist in many projects a (pardon the expression) credibility gap between objectives and expenditures.

B. A second major problem is the time span involved in assessing the degree to which objectives are attained. Nineteen sixty-five to sixty-six projects were late in getting established and were particularly prone to exist for a short duration. A serious question arises as to the sensitivity of even our best achievement instruments to assess the impact of a six week summer project. Assessment over longer periods of time are possible, of course, if the same objectives are maintained for <u>several</u> years

and involve the same children and if data are carefully collected and maintained. This in itself produces insurmountable problems for some schools, and in addition, yearly evaluations have been called for by state department and federal department officials.

C. A third major problem (mentioned before) is the lack of skills of local and state department officials in collecting, analyzing and summarizing data in addition to maintaining longitudinal records. Many state departments simply are not able to attract personnel to do the job required or provide time and funds to do it.

D. A fourth major problem is the diversity of instruments available and used for measuring educational objectives or assessing pupil characteristics. Even within specific grade levels and within a specialized area like reading skills, a wide variety of instruments are available for use. Coupled with the multitude of norms available, different editions and forms of the same tests, and possible times for administration, the combining of data across various projects appears ludicrous. Further, there are also areas in which standardized instruments are not available. An example might be an instrument to assess "health improvement."

E. A fifth problem, related to the fourth, is the diversity between states and even within states, of the format for reporting project results. I have seen reports in which state report forms were totally disregarded in favor of a locally contrived one. I suspect considerable variability existed among state reports

although I can't attest to it. Perhaps a common reporting procedure is impossible for projects as potentially diverse as Title I permits. On the other hand, it should not be unreasonable to provide some reporting of results. Most disappointing is to receive a set of raw scores on a group of children with no references whatsoever as to what the scores represent.

F. The sixth problem is the availability of personnel and equipment to analyze evaluative data. To analyze experimental and control group data administered before, during, and after a given Title I project duration and which is covaried with other data for statistical control presents a challenge, to say the least, for a principal with a desk calculator and a high school algebra background. For him it was a considerable challenge to even collect the data. Thus, it happened that ideal experimental data went uncollected because the possibility of analyzing the data was extremely remote.

G. Another problem which presented itself to some schools which did have data collection and analysis capabilities was the experimental design problem itself. Many school personnel sincerely desired to compare special Title I efforts with traditional classroom approaches. One problem that immediately befell them was that if all the children who were educationally deprived were identified and placed in the Title I group, what children were left for a control group? Could covariance designs adequately evaluate special or experimental effects? And then there were problems of the testing

of several groups with repeated measures. Are available tests of achievement in English equally valid for children taught by a structural linguist and those taught by a grammarian? If not, must both groups receive tests designed for both methods of instruction to make comparison? And how does initial mental age affect growth under several instructional procedures? It can be seen that the testing program to assess the special effects of Title I involvement may itself be a project of scope large enough to warrant special funding!

H. Reference was made previously to problems involved in changing forms for reporting data to the state department or to the U.S. Office of Education. Even more important than the implications for form changes is the problem of knowing <u>before the start of a project</u>, what data will be required in a report. Nothing is more frustrating to the local school than receiving a form 2/3 the way into a project which calls for data which should have been collected months before. (It's almost as bad as receiving the allocation that far into it).

I. The next problem goes somewhat beyond Title I itself and involves many data collection activities of state departments. The problem, generally speaking, is to produce <u>useable</u> feedback to the local school. From the experiences of the Iowa Educational Information Center, I can tell you that it is a non-trivial problem. Local schools feel that they are in the position of providing data and more data - much of it duplicated. The cry then is made that

all this is for naught - no one ever sees what use is made of the data. Hence a serious need for feedback of data analyses is present. The critical point is that feedback must be of the nature that it can be used to actually modify behavior of teachers or school administrators.

A personal mistake was made, for example, in thinking that if schools received multiple copies of a miniature cumulative folder on each student, that teachers would desire and use such information. Many thousands of dollars later, the I.E.I.C. discovered that in many schools the information was never distributed and those that did distribute it felt it came too late to be of use. The point to be made then is that the utility and design of feedback is a difficult task - one that needs much development and testing. Feedback must include detailed explanation of its importance and implications for actions to be taken and yet brief enough to be readily digested by the busy schoolman. At least one important feedback document, concerning data collected locally, statewide and nationally should be returned to each person directly involved with Title I projects.

J. The next problem is one that concerns the state departments in their evaluation of requests for funds by local agencies. The problem is differentiating between requests for funds to aid educationally deprived children or requests to meet general academic needs such as school nurses, guidance counselors, industrial education, etc. typically required for receipt of state legislative appropriations. I find it difficult to legitimately employ Title I

funds to meet these standards. These are minimums that are to be met irrespective of E.S.E.A. funds. Yet a number of projects of my recollection involved funds to help meet these minimum standards. There are, of course, excellent arguments in favor of supporting school budgets to meet such general school needs but they do not seem to be within the spirit of Title I. I feel therefore, that one problem deserving of attention at the state level, is differentiating more strictly, the general nature of the use to which Title I funds are employed. Other financial needs should be met through other means.

K. Perhaps this next point is not a problem but an observation. Since a number of federally funded projects may exist within a local school, it is of some interest to know what the degree of overlap is from project to project with respect to the students affected. It was our experience in studying Title I involved children, that a given child may be receiving services through as many as four or five separately funded projects. A weighting factor of the dollars spent per child, when evaluating academic improvement, might reveal an important summary concerning the overall effectiveness of Title I as it relates to various project objectives.

L. Finally, let me ask one naive question. What information do we have concerning the relationship of economic deprivation to educational growth? I am not personally convinced that it is the economic deprivation of the schools and their programs that is the most relevant variable in educational growth. It would appear that the economic deprivation of the family, and the resultant attitudes and behaviors associated with the economic standing of the family

which might be an even more important factor in educational attainment. It this be true, wouldn't efforts at improving the socio-economic characteristics of the family be a more promising avenue to explore in order to attain educational improvement of youth? Ascertaining the validity of this assertion conceivably could vastly affect the nature of projects funded under E.S.E.A., and in fact, the very continuance of federal support of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

III. Now that I have put forth what I consider to be some problems concerning Title I at the state level, let me propose some changes designed to cope with these problems.

A. Let me consider first the organizational structure for administration and evaluation of Title I activities. I feel there would be considerable advantage in the vesting of certain administrative responsibilities into interstate or regional centers. Specifically I would propose the following:

(a) Creation of six regional administrative offices of the U.S. Office of Education - a South Eastern, a South Central, a South Western, a North Western, a North Central and a North Eastern regional office.

(b) Each region would determine the procedures, forms and timetables for data collection, analyses and dissemination of data.

(c) Regional offices would process applications and disbursements of funds for Title I projects.

(d) Data processing would be established within these regions to properly and uniformly collect, analyze and disseminate data.

(e) Regional offices would provide consultants to aid in determining appropriate statistical designs, measuring instruments and project timetables for funded projects.

(f) Regional offices would maintain data banks of information collected on pupils involved in Title I projects and produce yearly longitudinal studies and summaries of these data.

This proposal is made as a device to meet the problems of reducing variations among states in their practice of administering Title I and to relieve the state department from an impossible data collection and analysis responsibility and to increase the efficiency of administration in general. State departments would maintain the responsibilities of providing the regional offices with data concerning per capita income, intrastate educational and socio-economic deficiencies, general educational standards and financial support to local schools, and indexes of general pupil achievement throughout the state.

B. I would propose that the U.S. Office of Education, along with specialists in the above proposed regions establish a hierarchy of needs amenable to attacks through Title I projects to serve as guidelines for establishment of local projects. These would not be meant to restrict local evaluation of needs but serve solely to establish the intents of the Congress concerning Title I.

C. I would propose that guidelines be developed cooperatively by the proposed regions for establishing criteria for including children into Title I projects. These guidelines might take the form of sample criteria for projects designed to meet the needs outlined in (B) above.

D. I would propose the selection of a repertoire of nationally normed tests to evaluate Title I objectives. Thus a selection of three or four reading tests, arithmetic tests, general achievement test batteries, etc. would serve as a basis for nationwide

comparative data. Where appropriate instruments are unavailable, regional offices would be charged with the responsibility for development and testing of them.

E. I propose the standardization of data collection instruments and procedures within each regional office to collect data necessary for evaluation and longitudinal growth studies. (See appendix)

F. I would propose each regional office would be charged with producing three major reports:

(a) A report to the U.S. Office of Education concerning the progress and effectiveness of Title I activities.

(b) A report to states within each region showing comparative data for regions, states and communities.

(c) A report to each contributing local school agency summarizing the analysis of data from that agency and providing detailed interpretations and suggestions for implementing changes.

G. I propose the directors of the regional centers for Title I plus 6 other nationally recognized persons from the U.S. Office of Education, college and universities and private industry form a National Review Panel on Title I to make recommendations to the Congress concerning this section of E.S.E.A.

IV. Summary

In summary, it may be said that local and state personnel involved with Title I have had problems concerning objectives, specialized personnel, data collection and analysis, and stability of administration and funding. It was proposed that regional centers be established to administer Title I, collect and analyze data and to classify and evaluate Title I objectives and evaluate the effectiveness in meeting these objectives. The structure for these regional offices already exists of course in various funded centers and in present regional offices of the U.S. Office of Education.

FIGURE 1

SAMPLE CARDS FOR COLLECTING TITLE I DATA

THE REGIONAL TITLE I EVALUATION SERVICE

Instructions: Grid a zero, a number or a letter in each column.

STATE CODE | COUNTY CODE | LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT CODE | BUILDING CODE | BIRTH ORDER AND FATHER'S SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER | SEX CODE | GRADE | LAST NAME, FIRST NAME, I.

(Side Two) THE REGIONAL TITLE I EVALUATION SERVICE

Instructions: Grid a zero, a number or a letter in each column.

PRE TEST SCORES

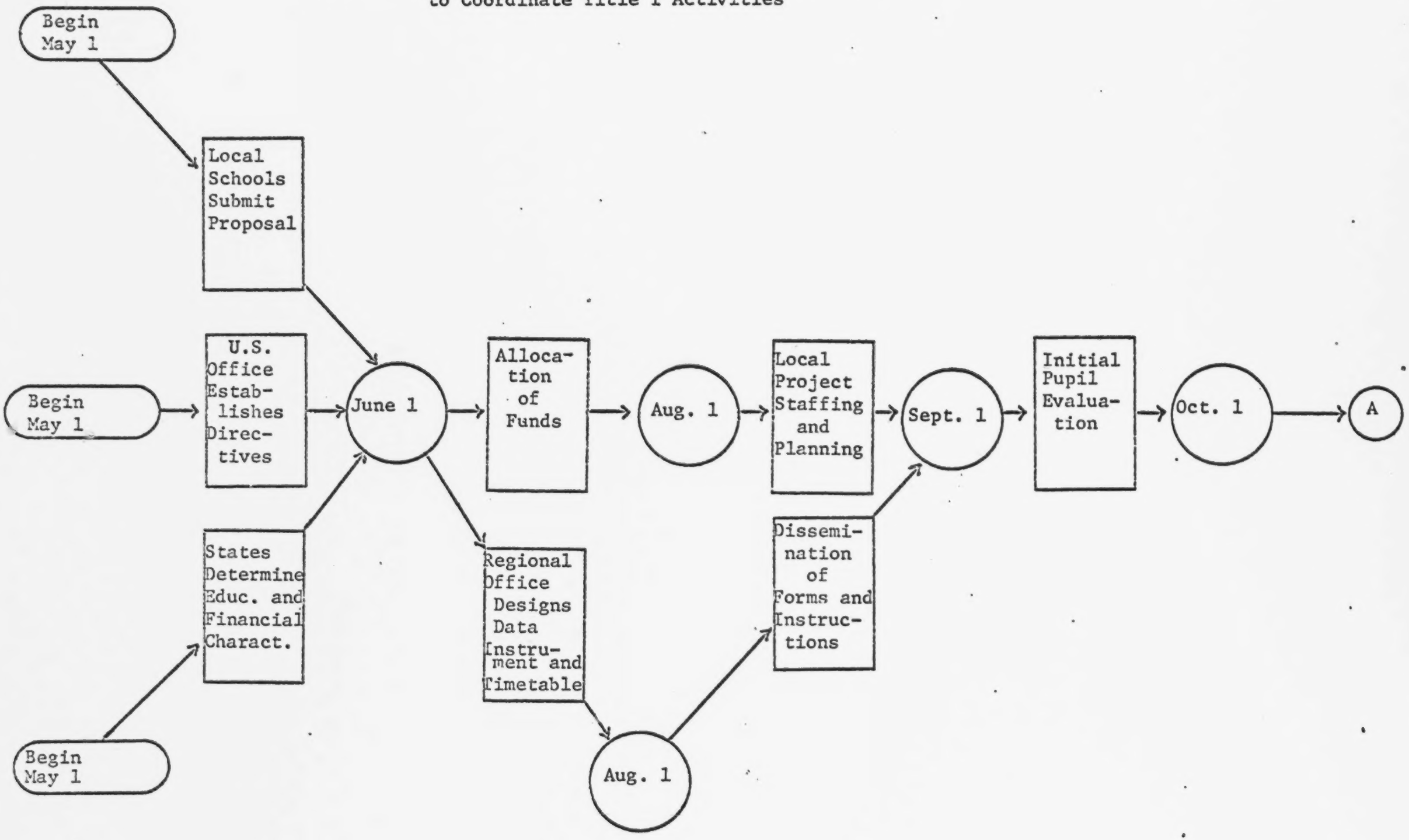
CODES

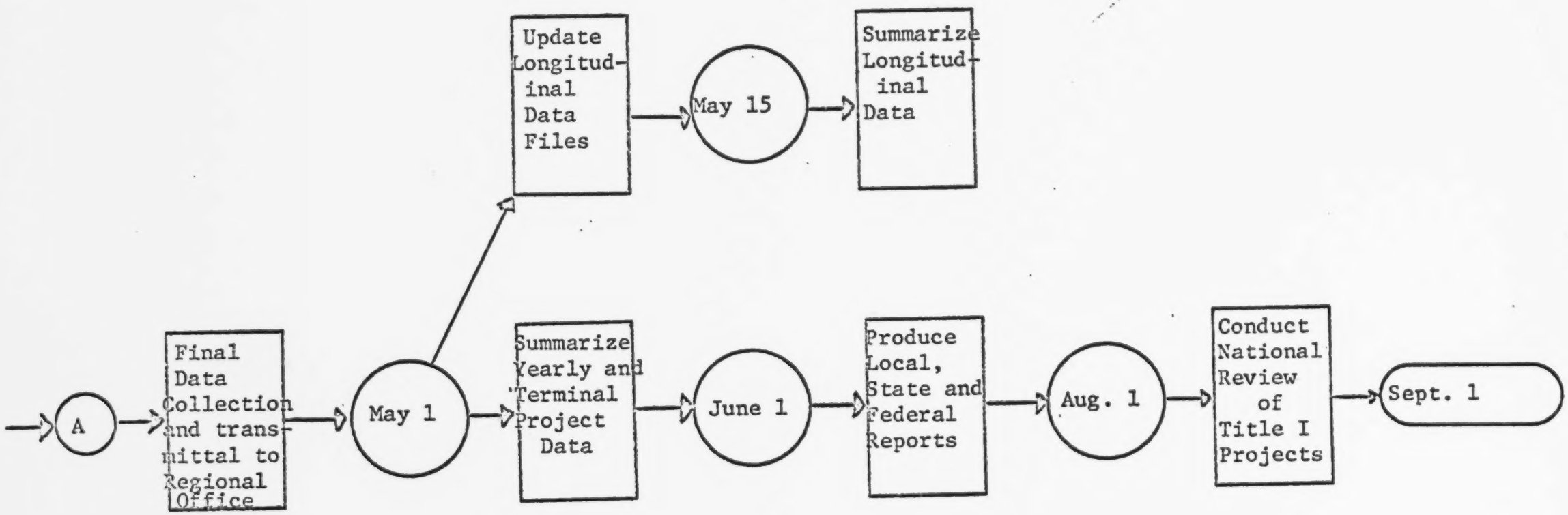
POST TEST SCORES

1 2 3 4 5 6

NON VERBAL INTELLIGENCE | PROJECT 1 | PROJECT 2 | PROJECT 3 | PROJECT 4 | EXPERIMENTAL OR CONTROL CODE

Figure 2 Tasks to be Accomplished Using Regional Centers to Coordinate Title I Activities




Update Longitud-inal Data Files
May 15
Summarize Longitud-inal Data
A
Final Data Collection and trans-mittal to Regional Office
May 1
Summarize Yearly and Terminal Project Data
June 1
Produce Local, State and Federal Reports
Aug. 1
Conduct National Review of Title I Projects
Sept. 1